

# Regulation/Season Structure Action Team

## A. Population Management Section

### A.5. Reduce the number of DMUs and combine Farmland regions

*Summary From DTR Report Page 25 Recommendation #5*

**Reduce the number of DMUs.** Decreasing the number of DMUs should improve the reliability of all metrics used for the simplified population goal system. Reduction in the number of DMUs has also been recommended by the Deer 2000 and 2006 SAK Audit Reports, but was not supported by the public because of concerns about management at the local level. Development of a DMAP as discussed elsewhere in this report would address these concerns by providing site-specific management options. Consideration could also be given to reducing the number of regions by combining the Farmland Regions.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.1. Simplify the regulatory process 3-5 year cycle

*Summary From DTR Report Page 29 Recommendation #1*

**Simplify the regulatory process by setting antlerless harvest goals, harvest regulations and antlerless permit quotas on a 3-5 year cycle.** The annual process of changing regulations, population estimates and antlerless permit quotas magnifies media coverage and public discontent. The annual turmoil and arguments over deer number estimates is pointless with only negative consequences. Increasing the length of the regulatory cycle should also provide better insight into population response to harvest regulations.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

B.2. Use DMU historical demand as base for permit quotas

*Summary From DTR Report Page 29 Recommendation #2*

**Base Antlerless Permit Quotas on DMU historical demand.**

Even when justified by SAK Indices or other indicators of population size, unlimited or large antlerless permit quotas that greatly exceed historical demand do little to increase actual harvest. However, they are likely to be met with concern and resistance by hunters. We commend the WDNR for using this approach in their 2012 Deer Season Recommendations.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.3. Increase the cost of all antlerless tags to \$12

*Summary From DTR Report Page 29 Recommendation #3*

**Increase the cost of all antlerless tags for Regular and Herd Control Units to \$12.** The cost of \$2 for an antlerless permit in Herd Control Units seems ridiculously low and many hunters see herd control designation as a downgrade in how WDNR values the deer resource. In past years many Herd Control Units had unlimited antlerless tag quotas or quotas where demand was half or less of supply. The reduction in the number of Herd Control Units from 64 in 2011 to 45 in 2012 was a positive step for improving the image of WDNR. Charging \$12 instead of \$2 per antlerless also will increase funding for damage abatement and compensation under the WDACP. Excess funds generated by this fee increase not used in the WDACP could be redirected to other needs such as funding for applied research to answer management questions. This recommendation could be adopted for all DMUs outside the CWD units by doing away with the Herd Control Unit designation.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.4. Charge a fee for antlerless tags in the CWD Zone

*Summary From DTR Report Page 30 Recommendation #4*

#### **Consider charging a fee for antlerless tags in the CWD Zone.**

CWD DMUs allow unlimited antlerless deer harvest and antlerless carcass tags are free of charge (limit of four per hunter per day) which implies deer have little or negative value in these areas. Charging a modest fee of \$5-10 per set of four tags would signify some positive value for deer and generated funds could be earmarked for CWD monitoring, research or outreach efforts.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

B.5. Establish a public lands antlerless permit system.

*Summary From DTR Report Page 30 Recommendation #5*

**Establish a public lands antlerless permit system.** A public lands antlerless permit system would address public concerns about potential overharvest of deer on these lands, especially the National Forests, and allow the WDNR to affirm the value of public lands to deer hunters and better respond to the potential impacts of maturing forests and predation on deer populations. During the Town Hall Meetings, we heard many comments about private landowners killing antlerless deer on public lands but not on their own land. This issue could be addressed through the DMAP for public access lands enrolled in the program.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.6. Limit antlerless deer harvest in Regular and Herd Control Zones

*Summary From DTR Report Page 30 Recommendation #7*

**Limit antlerless deer harvest in Regular and Herd Control Zones.** Limiting the number of Antlerless Deer Carcass Tags that can be purchased by an individual hunter to two-four should alleviate complaints that a few hunters are taking a disproportionate share of the harvest. The limit could be in addition to the free Antlerless Deer Carcass Tag provided with the Gun Deer or Archery Deer licenses effectively making the limit three-five antlerless deer per hunter. Those hunters purchasing both gun and archery licenses could harvest one additional antlerless deer. The impacts of limiting the number of tags that are sold on antlerless harvest and funds generated should be assessed.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.8. Re-evaluate October antlerless season in CWD Zone

*Summary From DTR Report Page 30 Recommendation #9*

**Re-evaluate the effectiveness of the October antlerless seasons in the CWD Zone.** Just over 2,000 deer were harvested during the 2011 CWD October hunt. Van Deelan et al. (2006) reported that harvest during antlerless-only hunts such as the October hunt is additive to that taken during other seasons. Analyses presented in the CWD section of this report are counter to this conclusion. With this level of harvest, it is questionable if the additive effect of harvest in the October hunt is worth the concerns of hunters about the impacts of this hunt on deer behavior during the 9-day November gun season. We recognize the challenges of WDNR and most state wildlife agencies in managing overabundant deer herds through regulated hunting as discussed by Holsman (2000) and Vercauteren et al. (2011), but this gesture would increase focus on the opening day of the 9- day gun season that many hunters desire. The youth, archery, muzzleloading, and other antlerless seasons would remain unchanged.



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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

B.9. Maintain the current buck limit for Gun and Archery

*Summary From DTR Report Page 31 Recommendation #10*

**Maintain the current buck limit of one buck per Deer Gun License (may be used in muzzleloader season) and one buck per Archery Deer License.** Hunters appear to be content with current limits on buck harvest although some desired that a limit of one buck over all seasons per year.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.10. Maintain the Bonus Buck Regulation in CWD Zone

*Summary From DTR Report Page 31 Recommendation #11*

**Maintain the Bonus Buck Regulation in CWD Zone.** The EAB regulation was repealed by the Wisconsin Legislature in 2011 prior to the beginning of this evaluation. The regulation was highly effective in increasing antlerless harvest (Van Deelen et al. 2006), but was unpopular with hunters because of the requirement that an antlerless deer be harvested prior to taking a buck. Beginning in the 2011 hunting season, hunters in the CWD Zone were able to harvest either an antlered buck or an antlerless deer as their first deer. Hunters wishing to pursue additional deer including antlered bucks were able to do so under a Bonus Buck permit. Virginia uses a similar strategy on private lands by allowing hunters to first harvest a buck, but then requires the hunter to harvest at least one antlerless deer before a second buck can be taken. This strategy has been effective in increasing antlerless harvest and popular with hunters (<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/deer/eab/>). The original EAB concept could be applied on private DMAP lands and even enhanced by requiring the harvest of two or more antlerless deer prior to taking a buck if the property owner so chooses. This is a common practice used on private lands in the southeastern United States.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.11. Resolve the cross-bow season issue

*Summary From DTR Report Page 31 Recommendation #12*

**Resolve the cross-bow season issue through the public involvement process.** The nationwide trend is toward accommodating cross-bow archers in some way, be it special seasons, over-lapping seasons or age-limited use in all seasons. Studies in Ohio have shown crossbows attract younger hunters to archery and allow older hunters to remain in the field, in spite of physical limitations.

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

B.12. Resolve the baiting and feeding issue outside CWD affected areas

*Summary From DTR Report Page 31 Recommendation #13*

### **Resolve the baiting and feeding issue outside CWD affected areas.**

The primary concerns expressed about baiting at the Town Hall and stakeholder meetings were the effects on deer behavior (becoming nocturnal) and potential conflicts with other hunters on public lands. While legality of baiting varies among states due to past customs, several aspects of baiting are cause for concern, especially transmission of diseases. Although Wisconsin has the most strict baiting regulations in the nation, with the current extent of CWD in the Farmland Regions and the recent discovery of a CWD positive deer in Washburn County, it is time to resolve the baiting and feeding issue as soon as possible. Involving human dimensions studies would help considerably. If not resolved, we feel spread of CWD will render this a moot point!

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## B. Hunting Regulations, Seasons and Bag Limits Section

### B.13. Simplifying seasons, bag limits and youth qualifications!

*Summary From DTR Report Page 31 Recommendation #14*

**Put the fun back into hunting!** We received numerous comments that most hunters are weary of the controversies surrounding deer hunting in Wisconsin and sincerely want resolution that will allow them to feel some ownership in the deer management process. The WDNR is already moving in this direction with more emphasis on people management as evidenced by improvements to the WDNR website including online forums for public inputs, public involvement in research activities, and the recommendations for the 2012 deer seasons submitted to the Natural Resources Board in April. Working with hunters and landowners through the DMAP and other educational efforts should build on these successes.

# Regulation/Season Structure Action Team

## G. People Section

G.3. Develop a public lands antlerless permit system.

*Summary From DTR Report Page 73 Recommendation #2*

**Develop a public lands antlerless permit system.** We also recommend that issuance of antlerless deer permits be separate for private and public lands. A public lands antlerless permit system is especially needed for the Northern and Central Forest Zones. Lands enrolled in the Wisconsin MFL program and WACAP as well as US Forest Service National Forests and state, county, and municipal forests open to public hunting could be included in the DMAP if the landowner or administrator so chooses. However, some landowners or administrators may not choose to enroll in the DMAP and an alternative process for issuance of permits on these public access properties may be needed. A public lands permit system would address public and Tribal concerns about potential overharvest of antlerless deer on these lands, allow the WDNR to affirm the value of public lands to deer hunters and Tribal hunters, respond to the impacts of changing habitat conditions due to maturing forests, focus antlerless harvest on local areas of deer overabundance, and respond to the possible increasing impacts of predation to deer populations on these lands. On many of these public lands, primary management goals will be enhancement of biodiversity and forest regeneration which will rely on hunter harvest of deer.

# Regulation/Season Structure Action Team

## I. Conservation Congress Section

I.1. WCC must have a more active role in deer management decision-making

*Summary From DTR Report Page 79 Paragraph 2*

**We feel the Conservation Congress must have a more active role in deer management decision-making at the local level.** The model we have put forward relies on DMAP, which focuses on site-specific development of management plans. Hence, we suggest a committee be formed at the county level by the local DNR biologist, comprised of stakeholder and Tribal (when appropriate) representatives, chaired by local Congress representatives, to annually review a landscape-based plan and deer-habitat management progress. The local and regional DNR biologists will work closely with these committees. Since deer management involves a patchwork of private and public land holdings, this landscape approach to planning must involve inputs from all interests. The Congress should be responsible for communicating the goals and accomplishments of local deer management efforts. The only downside we see to such a system is the potential for Tribal interests to become diluted as a “participant” in local management. We must remember, the Tribes are co-managers of this valuable resource.